

Forgivness

by Me

Category: Hogan's Heroes, Touched by an Angel

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2000-03-20 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-03-20 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 14:33:42

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 5,279

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Nine years after the war, can a dying Burkhalter admit his mistakes, and can Hogan forgive him? Angels try to help Hogan reconcile his feelings and forgive, and Burkhalter to receive God's forgiveness.

Forgivness

FORGIVENESS - a Hogan's Heroes/Toughed By An Angel crossover

Robert Hogan smiled politely in the tiny church in Heidelberg. The city was seat of the American-controlled sector of Germany. No, Robert, you might as well admit it - this is West Germany. And it might be that that young man up there is right, this is punishment from God. And they probably deserve it. Most of them. But this young man's family - well, his dad had been Master Sergeant at LuftStalag 13, where Hogan had run a sabotage and rescue operation in World War Two. And Sergeant Schultz had been excellent at ignoring Hogan and his men. Schultz's family was all in West Germany. Hogan was glad of that. He knew there were good people in Germany - but they had been so few and far between, it seemed hopeless at times.

To Hogan's right sat James Ivan Kinchloe, who retired a Captain in the Air Force. Kinch had been Hogan's radio man and a whiz at creating ID tags and other documents. On his right sat Peter Newkirk, British subject, Frenchman Louis LeBeau, and sergeant John Baker, like Kinchloe a black man. Hogan wished Carter had been able to come, but he had a four year old and another new baby. He would make the next reunion, in America. This was special for the Schultz family, though, and Hogan had decided, since Hans Schultz insisted on his coming, it would make a nice event around which to stage a reunion.

"I would also like to greet some honored guests. General Robert Hogan, would you please stand," spoke Hans' son, Oskar, from the pulpit. Hogan blushed slightly but stood anyway, his back giving him a little discomfort from having sat on the hard pews. He hoped Oskar would not mention anything of his endeavors. Luckily, Oskar merely

said "this American is a true friend of Germans. He understood the difference between civilians and military far before any of us realized how distorted, how evil, our leaders' views were." And that was all. Good, thought Hogan, as Oskar introduced several other people, then introduced his own family. A guest preacher would give the actual sermon during the ordination. Hogan, unaccustomed to Protestant churches, had thought about bowing out, but Oskar had been the one to teach him about God's forgiveness after the war, so out of respect he remained.

As the guest preacher stood to speak, a woman with long, auburn hair entered and walked up to the stage. LeBeau uttered a tiny wolf whistle. What a beauty, he murmured.

Considering that the preacher had stopped, Newkirk decided it was okay to lean over and talk. "Yep, that bird's so pretty she looks like a reg'lar angel," the Englishman agreed.

"Who is she?" Newkirk had no idea.

Suddenly, the minister stood at the pulpit and announced "in the fine tradition of the early church, Oskar Schultz has been called to follow that chariot,' so to speak. Fitting that that is what my sermon was about. As for the ordination, well, perhaps we can do this at our evening service; if not then, next week. An emergency has called him away." Hogan and his men glanced at Oskar's worried face as he picked up his Bible and half sprinted toward the exit.

"What's wrong," Hogan asked the mysterious woman. "Who are you?"

"My name is Monica," came the Irish-sounding voice. "There is a man Oskar has been trying to witness to for a long time." Hogan followed her out as the others remained seated.

"What happened," he wanted to know.

Monica turned to Hogan, suddenly feeling that perhaps he, too, was part of her assignment. "It is a man named Alburk Burkhalter. He has been in prison for war crimes." She lowered her head. "I was sent to tell him that Herr Burkhalter is dying."

Andrew, an angel of death, stood by the bedside of former general Alburk Burkhalter. "General," he said to him as he stood, in human form, in a doctor's outfit.

"Where am I," murmured the incredibly obese man.

He's lucky he lasted this long with his weight, considered the angel as he explained. "You've had a heart attack. The doctors had to revive you." A doctor entered with two grieving women, one of whom was Burkhalter's wife, the other being his sister. "Doctor Steinman, I can take it from here."

"Very well," came the blonde-haired man's voice. "I just brought the women in to see him once." The medic was very careful not to say "one last time," though he knew in the coronary intensive care unit, that was quite likely to be the case. The obese man's strength was incredibly sapped, even after being revived they knew the chances

weren't good. Soon, the general would likely be seeing Andrew and nobody else, as he began to slip into unconsciousness and be able to see only in his subconscious.

Burkhalter wanted to ask if the man had a brother or some other relation who practiced in Hammelburg, but was too weak to do anything besides open his mouth. Andrew prayed that the strength would somehow grow a little. Though angels are not all-knowing, he was given the impulse to answer the query. "Doctor Steinman is from a family of wonderful doctors. I am Doctor Andrew Himmelman."

The women were told they could remain in the room if they sat quietly. They were too nervous to do so, so they went out and chatted in the waiting room. Doctor Steinman followed. Andrew sat with Burkhalter, holding his hand. "It is hard, isn't it?"

"I should be a great soldier, riding off to Valhalla," moaned Burkhalter, "except we are defeated."

"God can still provide a victory for you," noted Andrew.

"I did my best," the former general groaned, not seeming to pay attention, "I followed orders like I should." Andrew knew he would have a long road to hoe. He hoped some help would arrive.

Monica chatted with Hogan as they walked for a few moments outside the church. The former POW fretted a little at the thought of Burkhalter. "What has you so upset," she wanted to know.

Hogan grumbled. "You know, in there what Oskar said...it's kind of true." He frowned a little. So many Germans mourned their nations' evils during the Holocaust. Even those who shrugged it off saying "we didn't know" admitted that the Nazis had been monsters. But men like Burkhalter - too innocent to be executed as war criminals, yet guilty enough to be sentenced to years in prison - irked him. They spoke so much of how they were "just following orders." Schultz hadn't always followed orders - he'd ignored things. Even Kommandant Klink had been far more lenient than Burkhalter, in charge of all prison camps, would hve liked. The fact it was orders didn't make it right.

To Monica, the American explained. "I understand that grace,' and accepted it for myself, so don't start on that." She wondered why he seemed so defensive, then understood with his next breath. "I needed God's forgiveness for some things, sure. But there comes a point when you go too far. And I just can't see being a friend of someone who was so mean, so uncaring..." He trailed off, disgusted with the thoughts of the war - and the war crimes trials - as they came back to him. He'd never let it show, always being a rather private man, but inside he'd loathed the evils of Naziism and all who steadfastly supported it. Yes, something - perhaps that grace working in him - had led him to forgive those who were truly unaware or truly repentent. But Burkhalter was neither.

"It is hard to forgive, especially with the madness of the war," the angel agreed with him. "But - and I am sorry, but I must say - forgiveness is not saying something is right." Sensing Hogan's angry glare, she tried a different tact. This was somewhat out of her league as a Search and Rescue angel, but she would give it a try. "Tell me about your salvation experience."

The general shrugged. "Not much to it; I came down here, had a long talk while we walked in the woods, and I came to realize I wasn't perfect. I needed to accept that I needed God's forgiveness, and I asked for it and got it."

This seems just like him, thought Monica, just a short and simple answer, not going into details. Tess, a darkp-skinned angel, appeared in the spirit realm behind Monica, unseen to Hogan. "He's been doing covert work for so long, dearie, he's not likely to tell you any more. He's just too used to being secret."

"Should I try a different route," Monica wondered.

"No, go on with what you were going to say, Angel Baby. Just don't be surprised if he rejects it. Then try to see what he has against Burkhalter," suggested the superior angel. "This will be a good learning experience for you, I know you've expressed a desire to become a caseworker."

Monica turned back to Hogan. "You are right, none of us are perfect. Do you know the story of Corrie Ten Boom?" He didn't. "She ws a Christian woman who hid Jews. She was captured by Gestapo and taken to a concentration camp. She lost her whole family. She says one of the hardest things for her to do was learn to forgive. When she met a former captor who had later received Christ's forgiveness, it was very hard for her to forigve him when he apologized. Finally, she asked the Lord to help her, and He did. She said it was the most wonderful feeling."

"She's known the Lord a lot longer than I have, I bet," remarked the general.

Monica nodded. "True. But she could forgive a ruthless guard - what did General Burkhalter do that was so terrible?"

Hogan pondered the query. Was it just that he was one of the men who gave orders, instead of an underling who didn't know better - though he should have? Was it the fact he'd served on Hitler's staff, and reported to that madman? Or was it what the general ignored - the fact that some of the other kommandants under him were incredibly harsh, almost sadistic, and Burkhalter did nothing to stop it? Or, was it the fact that even after learning of all the atrocities, the former general had never apologized for anything, had never admitted his guilt. No, he hadn't tortured anyone himself - to his knowledge, at least. He even hated the Gestapo, though only because he felt they shouldn't get involved in bothering military men. But Burkhalter just wouldn't admit that he'd done anything wrong, despite the evidence. Despite the testimony against him.

Some men might have uttered a couple of those items. Hogan could see Carter or Schultz blabbering about all of them at once. But the general merely kept them to himself. "I don't know, there's just so much," he muttered, almost to himself.

Andrew listened as Burkhatler droned on about the war crimes trials. "We were just doing what we were told," muttered the dying man. "What is the crime in that?"

"The Nazis did a lot of mean things," noted Andrew solemnly.

"But I never did. I hated the Gestapo." The thought of Major Hochstetter and others like him made Burkhalter's blood boil - and gave him severe angina. Andrew administered a sedative to calm the man. "That Hochstetter...he was one mean fellow. Hogan had..." He trailed off.

"Yes, he was, I'm sure." Andrew prayed for guidance. "Did you have many men under you?"

"That bungling Klink." Andrew could tell by the grimace that another pain shot through the general's chest. Please, he prayed, let him hold on till Oskar gets here. Give him one last chance. So many prayers have gone to You for this man. The general continued. "Klink was a jinx. Handed over the camp...at the end."

Trying to get the general off a clearly distressing subject, Andrew asked "were there other camps besides Stalag 13?"

Burkhalter's memory was getting foggy. He could only recall a few names. "Kurtz, Schnelling...Bracht..." He sighed. "Very tough on prisoners...got good information out of them."

"I'm sure they did. Were they nice to them?"

The general kept thinking of Klink. "Klink is a fool. He is too nice...need more like Kurtz."

Oh no, thought Andrew, he's not becoming delusional yet, is he? Is he back fighting the war? The angel mentioned "you know, some of the things they did probably weren't too nice, were they?"

"Trying to win war," muttered Burkhalter weakly as Oskar Schultz entered in a huff. "This is Germany. Can't be friends with the enemy."

Andrew was sorry he'd brought up the war. Luckily, Oskar's entrance would likely draw him back to the present. "Oskar Schultz is here, Herr Burkhalter."

"Oskar...nice boy...always brings me...strudel in prison." Andrew saw Oskar smile. Good, he's back in the present, considered the angel.

Oskar motioned the "doctor" over. "How is he?"

"Borderline. You coming snapped him out of some delusions." Andrew surprised Oskar a little with the next line, as Schultz's son wasn't used to meeting many doctors who had great faith. "I think you have a small window of opportunity to witness to him. I need to stay, too."

"Certainly, Herr Doctor," came the man's voice as he sat with his Bible on his lap.

Hogan had entered the service toward the end, listening as the choir sang and the church recited the Apostle's Creed. He met with his men after the service. "Burkhalter's dying," he announced with no emotion.

Kinch nodded. "Yeah, preacher asked the whole church to pray for his

soul; I guess Oskar's really tried to help him for a long time." The black man sighed slightly. He'd always shown little emotion, remaining calm in the most difficult of circumstances while with Hogan's Heroes at Stalag 13. The attitude continued here. A Baptist, he'd found the Evangelical Lutheran church closer to his own than he expected. The only thing that bothered him was no invitation had been given this time. He made a mental note to speak to Oskar about that.

Klink walked up to Hogan and inquired as to Burkhalter's whereabouts. "I would like to go and see him, to pay my respects," came the now bald, monocled man.

Hogan didn't want to say anything as callous as "don't bother," but he felt it would make little difference. He might already be dead. Besides, hadn't Oskar said that the thought of Klink disturbed the former general? Well, he told himself, it might be nice to annoy the former general one more time by taking Klink to see him. No, he told himself, you have no reason to go. Do you?

Hogan shook his head. "I don't know; I'll let you know if I find out." With that, the man who was now Schultz's bookkeeper departed. The Heroes noted Schultz and his children praying in a circle around the pulpit as they left. Monica met them outside the church. "You still here; I thought you'd gone back there, to...whoever it was who sent you."

"I felt it best to wait for you, in case you wanted to come," she explained.

"Look, lady, I don't know why you think we'd have any interest." Hogan sighed. "Oskar, yeah, I can maybe see..."

Monica tilted her head at the hesitant tone. "Because you don't think it will do any good," she inquired.

After observing the silent American for a second, LeBeau whispered "you should know better than to ask him that. He does not like to give out personal information."

Newkirk quipped "it took us a few days fore he'd give us is name." The others chuckled.

Monica placed a hand on Hogan's shoulder, as LeBeau and Newkirk wondered why she'd fall for the aging general when she could have younger chaps like themselves. Must be the star, the Frenchman considered. "I understand," Monica told Hogan, "there are things about the war you do not like to talk about. But sometimes seeing someone like this is the best way to heal."

"I don't need to heal," snapped Hogan. "I've already admitted my faults before God." Plus, I really don't want to give out classified information about our mission; or even the fact there was a covert operation. And some of the things I know could only be known by a spy.

"Maybe you need to help him." Although Andrew and Oskar should be doing a good enough job themselves, she considered as he rejected the advice. She walked away, disappearing into the angelic realm.

"You tried," noted Tess. "Maybe too hard. But keep at it, one day you'll get it right."

LeBeau smacked his lips. "It's a shame there were such wicked people in Germany back then."

"Yeah, it is." Hogan meandered around the lot as cars pulled away. Western Germany had made a rather nice recovery from the war's devastation, he considered as he surveyed the landscape. Eastern Germany, on the other, was a mess. He knew that was the Communists' fault, but he couldn't help but blame the Nazis. If it wasn't for them, who knows how wonderful a democracy it would be - or how many great people would have survived.

"Especially the Gestapo," the Englishman stated. "Just no good to them at all. Don't remember a single one of them turnin' clean round an' bein' traitor; now generals, there was a few."

"They all could have, they didn't have to follow that maniac." Even after all this time, Hogan still found it hard to refer to Hitler by name.

Still thinking of how Oskar might be doing with Burkhalter, Kinch speculated as to how many changed after the war. "I remember quite a few during - we helped one in July of 44 with that briefcase bomb, and I remember a couple others who were agents. I bet quite a few changed."

"Yeah, maybe." Hogan sighed, glanced down, and considered his mens' conversation. He always seemed to know when something was brewing. "You want to visit him, don't you?"

"I think it'd be nice," was all Kinch would say.

Hogan turned to look at them. "Well, don't let me stop you. I can't order you not to anymore."

"But we're a team," noted the Englishman.

"Oui, no matter how many stars you have, you will always be mon colonel." LeBeau pumped his fist slightly and proclaimed "we will always be Hogan's Heroes, no matter how old we get."

The American breathed deeply several times. Eyeing the looks of anticipation, he spoke in a whisper, forcing himself to admit things could be different with the German. "Guess anything could happen." He slowly ambled toward them.

"Why not, we flew a general out of Germany in his own plane," noted Newkirk.

"Oui, and built a Tiger tank in the barracks."

"Plus," Kinch added, "convincing the general staff Klink was the new chief."

Maybe that's what's wrong, Hogan mused, and why I want to go a little. I've still got that part of me that says we have to be the ones to do things. And I have a problem when they're not in our great unit's control. "Okay, let's go see what's up."

Oskar had been speaking with the former general for almost an hour. Burkhalter was getting weaker, but still responded. "You see, General," the eldest Schultz child explained for what seemed like the millionth time over the years, "it is not an Earthly judgement by which we are condemned. The notion of sin is no more American than it is German or Swiss or whatever." He could tell something was different about this time as he noticed Andrew leaving to call in the women. Are we getting close, he wondered.

Just a few more minutes, he prayed as he thought he heard Burkhalter begin to mutter something. The obese man grumbled and said "we could have won."

"You still can win the greatest win of all," consoled Oskar. He'd been through so much of the Bible, he wondered if he had any ammo left. Was there a book of it he hadn't quoted from? "I, too, was a sinner, so are all Americans, Germans, everyone. Not because people judge, not because of some war, but because of that perfect place called Heaven, where there can be no pain, no hurting, no lying, no evil at all. Where the eye has not seen, nor the ear heard, nor has entered into the heart of man the wonders which await us." Andrew could see the general beginning to weep.

"Is that win really out there for me," he wanted to know. "Even though...we lost so badly?"

"Yes, but to reach it you must realize you cannot reach it yourself, as a soldier reaches Valhalla. Forget all the others in the world, forget the wins and losses, forget whether or not one race is superior to other people, pretend you are the only man in the world - do you, Alburk Burkhalter, understand you are a sinner? It does not matter what you think or would want to say to the world, to the Allies, to that court, the time has come to decide what you will say to God."

Burkhalter grumbled, coughing a little. "My best...was not good enough for God."

"That is right, but God gave you a free gift, and you can accept that gift before it is too late. That Christ has taken your place, and that by repenting and trusting His death, burial, and resurrection as having taken your sin away, you can be saved." As Oskar took Burkhalter through the plan of salvation one more time, the angel smiled broadly. Another eleventh hour confession was occurring. It would be like the thief on the cross. He excused himself quietly, saying he was soon to be off duty but in truth preparing himself for the duty assigned to him in this instance.

As he left the room, he saw Hogan and his men standing somewhat expectantly. "How is he," they wanted to know.

"Shhh, I think he is understanding the truth finally." He thought a moment as the Heroes looked slightly askance at each other - especially Hogan. To the American general, he explained. "It does not matter what the man was before, the Bible promises if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are made new.' It is just like the caterpillar and how it becomes a butterfly."



"I've always loved that analogy," noted Hogan. He wished he'd had more time to enjoy the splendor of nature in the forests of Western Germany during the war. Maybe that's what Carter was thinking about all those times he messed up, pondered the American.

"It comes from Germany's own Martin Luther, who said the story of the Resurrection is told every spring in the rebirth of nature," the angel told them. He was sure Oskar would use the same analogy. "Would you like to go in and see him, General Hogan? I have a feeling he would like to see you." Of course, this was mere guesswork on Andrew's part, but he knew it couldn't hurt. And, it would probably help Hogan.

Hogan uttered a huge sigh. He'd be going in alone, without his men; the room was too small to accommodate everyone. Yet, something inside - perhaps the love which seemed to radiate from the doctor, perhaps simple curiosity - urged him onward. As Andrew opened the door, Hogan took one difficult step toward it. The rest came easier than he would have expected, and he was soon at the bedside of the weeping Burkhalter. From Oskar's contented grin, he could tell something wonderful had occurred. Burkhalter's wife - wow, she was almost as homely as Burkhalter's sister, he contemplated - held his left hand, and his sister his right as the ex-general spoke in a whisper, seemingly from the back of his throat. "Hogan...I just had...to say...I am sorry...for the war."

Hogan finally removed his cap. He considered the attempts by generals like Burkhalter to destroy the Allies, to conquer the world, and to ruin prisoners' spirits with some of the evil POW camp kommandants they had. He knew Burkhalter had never cared before about the means so much as he just wanted to win for the "glory of the Fatherland." And, unlike the vain Klink, who still seemed to be fighting World War One back then, Hogan knew this man truly wanted the fuhrer to win. Even after all Burkhalter must have seen personally.

Hence, it came as something of a shock when Burkhalter said "will you...forgive me..." before coughing up a little more. Mrs. Burkhalter wiped his face with a cloth.

The American had never shaken a German's hand on purpose - even now, when he had a close friendship with Schultz and a casual one with Klink, he disliked the notion of shaking hands. That was something done in a gentleman's agreement, and few Germans had been gentlemen in that wicked era a decade earlier. True, he knew that he should - indeed, the Lord commanded that His children forgive one another. And, just hearing those words - without seeing anything in the man's face - would have told him all he needed to know. This was now a brother in the family of God. And yet, it was so hard.

Hogan scrunched his eyes, breathing deeply again. All those bombs, all those civilian casualties, all the soldiers, and he was supposed to forgive Burkhalter? True, it wasn't like forgiving Hitler, but still, that man had supported their foolishness for so long, it was extremely difficult to imagine. Ah, but he knew it truly was a new man in that hospital bed. If he could only summon the strength to make that leap of faith, to forgive, to show that spirit of love.

Hogan finally reached out his hand and grasped the hand which had been held by Mrs. Linkmeyer. Instantly, he felt a warmth come over

him which he could never have expected or explained. A very low "I forgive you" came out of his mouth, from where he didn't know. He never would have believed it possible. But, as his men had said, they had all lived to do the impossible back in their sabotage and rescue days. Suddenly, tears of joy began to fill his eyes.

Moments later, Burkhalter breathed deeply and floated up, not quite standing on the ground, from his perspective.. "What in the..."

"I'm here to help you," came Andrew's voice. Burkhalter turned to inquire as to what Andrew was doing back after he'd gone off duty - and found himself staring at him. Andrew had an immense glow around him, and the sound of doves permeated the atmosphere, making Burkhalter lose sight of the weeping family members. "I am an angel of the Lord," came the explanation, "and I was sent to help Oskar one last time, but mostly I was sent to take you into the presence of God."

"The presence..." Burkhalter walked over to the window and gazed outward. "There is so much I do not understand about that...but somehow, I have a feeling it is a good thing I am meeting Him with my sins forgiven."

"Very fortunate," Andrew agreed, God's love resonating from his face. "It is His will that none perish, but that all come to repentance, but He can't let any sin up there. It's a perfect place, far beyond our power to comprehend."

"Certainly more appealing than a soldier romping off to Valhalla," agreed the general. Andrew gave him a minute to think - while death, for the saved person, held no pain, it still took a little getting used to at times. Finally, after gazing out the window for several more moments, Burkhalter and Andrew stepped out, arm in arm, into eternity.

Hogan considered it ironic that they had returned just before the evening service. As with all his earlier missions, they'd finished just in time. He gazed absently around him as they entered the church, ignoring Schultz's questioning look. Kinch gave him a thumbs up sign and grinned.

After the service, Kinch approached the new minister. "Congratulations," he remarked. "That was wonderful. One thing I wonder about, don't you think maybe the people should have a chance..."

"Say no more," interrupted the German. "After what I have seen today, I know it is a crime to end a service without giving people a chance to come to the altar and do business with the Lord. We never know when we will breath our last. Today, the Lord says, is the day of salvation." He turned to Hogan. "How did you like it, General?"

"Fine, I must say, the new generation of Germans is certainly a lot better than the old, if you're any indication." He thought for a moment, pursed his lips, and flung out his hand, deliberately shaking a German's hand for the first time he could recall. May as well get this over with too, he considered as he and Oskar grasped hands. "I'll look forward to hearing about you. Good luck."

"Danke."

As the Heroes left, Hogan mulled over the events of the day. It was almost exactly nine years ago that they'd been liberated. He considered how the general had tried to fight the Allies to the end. Monica walked up to them. "How was it," she wanted to know.

"Fine" was all Hogan would say.

The auburn-haired angel pondered the immense love of God, and the excitement in Heaven over seeing a man of faith rise out of the mess that had been World War Two. "It took great courage to get through those days, when Oskar's countrymen were preaching hate. Isn't it wonderful to see the land healing, to see people forgiving one another?"

Hogan simply nodded and grinned slightly. Tess appeared beside Monica, unseen to the others. "The important part got done - they came together in this life," she remarked.

The long-haired angel sighed. "It's still going to take a long time for all sides, isn't it."

Tess put a hand on her shoulder. "Angel Baby, God's mercies endure forever. Yes, it may take a while. And it may be a long time before the country comes back together. But the process begins here, with people like these who realize forgiveness is merely saying I love you anyway.' That's what God said about them as sinners; that sin is bad, but He loved them anyway. Yes, it takes time, but God is forever. And that's more than enough time for Him."

End  
file.